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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the effects of personal response on both the research and the teaching of language and literature. Two studies are presented which show how personal response affects interpretive judgment. In addition, a study of classroom responses to literature is compared to a study of language, indicating that personal motivations preface objective analyses. The report concludes that, from a personal response perspective, research and teaching are interactive processes. (RL)

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SOME RECENT PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH

IN

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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FOR MANY WHO VIEW SUBJECTIVITY TO BE FUNDAMENTAL IN THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, THE IDEA OF RESPONSE HAS REMAINED INAPPLICABLY VAGUE. ON AN AD HOC BASIS, WE CAN READILY REPORT TO OTHERS WHAT OUR RESPONSES HAVE BEEN; BUT ONCE IT IS A CENTRAL ITEM OF ATTENTION IN RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY, IT IS A LESS MANAGEABLE IDEA. FOR EXAMPLE, ALAN PURVES'S PROVOCATIVE BOOK, How Porcupines Make Love,[1] PRESENTS MANY VALUABLE SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO ELICIT RESPONSE IN CLASSROOMS, BUT VERY FEW ON WHAT TO EXPECT OR ON WHAT TO DO WITH WHAT DOES EMERGE. AS RECENTLY AS THE NOVEMBER 1976 NCTE SESSION ON "RESPONSE TO LITERATURE," THE TOPICS OF TWO OF THE PAPERS WERE "ON RESPONDING TO READERS' RESPONSES" (BY WALTER SLATOFF) AND "THEY READ; THEY RESPOND. THEN WHAT?" (BY RICHARD ADLER). THE ISSUES POSED BY THESE TWO PRESENTATIONS WERE NOT EXCLUSIVELY ONES OF CLASSROOM TACTICS. THEY RAISED, IN ONE DEGREE OR ANOTHER, QUESTIONS REGARDING HOW KNOWLEDGE CHANGES IN CONSEQUENCE OF ATTENTION TO RESPONSE. TRADITIONALLY, THE ESTABLISHMENT AND NEGOTIATION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN THE PROVINCE OF "RESEARCH," WHICH HAS BEEN ALMOST UNIVERSALLY UNDERSTOOD AS THE FORMAL PRESENTATION OF "FINDINGS" AND "FACTS." HOWEVER, THE ATTEMPTS TO DO RESEARCH ON RESPONSE USING TRADITIONAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE OBJECTIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN LESS THAN SATISFACTORY. THE MOST FORCEFUL OF SUCH STUDIES--THOSE BY JAMES SQUIRE AND JAMES WILSON PUBLISHED BY THE NCTE MORE THAN A DECADE AGO--THEMSELVES SUGGESTED THAT A LESS FORMAL, MORE INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH IS PROBABLY NEEDED. ON THE OTHER HAND THE EFFORT OF NORMAN HOLLAND TO INQUIRE INTO THE EXTENDED RESPONSE OF INDIVIDUAL READERS WAS GROUNDED IN THE ARTIFICIAL SITUATION OF THE RESEARCHER PAYING HIS READING SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EXPERIMENT. ALTHOUGH ALL OF THESE STUDIES REMAIN VALID CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE OF RESPONSE TO LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, THEY GROW FROM THE DECREASINGLY VIABLE BELIEF THAT RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY ARE SEPARATE ACTIVITIES: KNOWLEDGE IS TO BE DISCOVERED UNDER PURE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS, WHILE TEACHING TAKES PLACE IN ORDER TO BRING THIS PURE KNOWLEDGE TO THE "EMPTY SLATES" WHO OCCUPY CLASSROOMS. THE MANY TEACHERS WHO AUTHENTICALLY SUBSCRIBE TO THE BASIC IMPORTANCE OF RESPONSE AND WHO WISH TO ENACT

THIS COMMITMENT, ARE THEN INHIBITED BECAUSE INTERSUBJECTIVELY DERIVED KNOWLEDGE IS NOT EXAMINABLE AND THERE IS NO WAY FOR THEM TO BE "ACCOUNTABLE" TO SCHOOL BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATIONS FOR THE PROGRESS OF THEIR STUDENTS. IN THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION, I WILL ADDRESS THIS ISSUE BY POINTING TO CERTAIN NEW DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH THAT ARE BROADER IN SCOPE AND ARE MORE FIRMLY GROUNDED IN THE BELIEF THAT KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE BEGINS, RATHER THAN ENDS, IN PEDAGOGY. I WILL ALSO EXPLORE HOW A SUITABLY CONCEIVED NOTION OF RESPONSE CONNECTS THE STUDY OF LITERATURE WITH THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE IN A PRAGMATIC, PERSUASIVE, AND PROMISING WAY.

SUSAN M. ELLIOT'S DOCTORAL DISSERTATION, "FANTASY BEHIND PLAY" (1973),[2] A STUDY OF CRITICAL AND PERSONAL RESPONSES TO HAROLD PINTER'S THE BIRTHDAY PARTY, THE CARETAKER, AND THE HOMECOMING, PRESENTS, IN PART, A DISCUSSION OF ALL THE CRITICISM OF THE THREE PLAYS PUBLISHED BEFORE 1972. SHE OUTLINES THE VARIOUS CRITICAL STRATEGIES USED BY THE CRITICS AND REVIEWERS TO INTERPRET, RATIONALIZE, OR REJECT THE PLAYS PURSUANT TO THEIR ANNOUNCED RESPONSES OF REPEATED INTELLECTUAL PUZZLEMENT. SHE PROPOSES THAT THIS RESPONSE MAY BE UNDERSTOOD AFFECTIVELY AS A FEELING OF IMPOTENCE. WHEN THIS FEELING IS PROJECTED ONTO THE PLAYS, THEY ARE CRITICALLY CHARACTEPIZED AS FAILURES OF NORMAL RATIONALITY, OR, IN THE USUAL PHRASE, "THEATER OF THE ABSURD." OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IS THAT MS. ELLIOTT COUNTS HERSELF AMONG THOSE CRITICS WHO HAVE HAD THIS RESPONSE, AND SHE INVESTIGATES AT LENGTH ITS CHARACTER IN HER OWN EXPERIENCE BY PRESENTING HER RESPONSE STATEMENTS, HER INTERPRETIVE JUDGMENTS, AND HER ANALYSES OF THEM BOTH. SHE IS THUS ABLE TO DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENTIAL PATH FROM RESPONSE TO INTERPRETIVE JUDGMENT. AFTER COMPLETING HER STUDY, SHE PRESENTS THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATION, WHICH SHE SEES AS "A MOST AMAZING EXPERIENCE."

> IN THE MIDST OF SEEING PINTER'S MOST RECENT PLAY, OLD TIMES, FOR THE FIRST TIME, IN NEW YORK IN NOVEMBER OF 1971, I FELT MYSELF POWERFULLY REJECTING IT AND SAYING IN GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT, "PINTER DIDN'T MAKE IT THIS TIME. HOW AWFUL THIS IS!" I FELT TERRIBLY DEPRESSED AFTER SEEING THE PRODUCTION. AFTER HOURS OF ARGUMENT WITH MY HUSBAND ABOUT WHAT IT WAS ABOUT, I SUDDENLY

RECOGNIZED MY PROBLEM. ON THE SURFACE, THE PLAY HAD ME STYMIED; I WAS PUZZLED. THIS HAD NEVER BEFORE OCCURRED TO ME SO LONG AFTER AN EXPERIENCE OF PINTER. USUALLY I HAD IT "ALL FIGURED OUT." I SAY THAT I WAS PUZZLED "ON THE SURFACE" BECAUSE LATER, AFTER SETTING DOWN SOME THOUGHTS THAT CAME TO MIND ABOUT THE PLAY, AND READING IT ONCE IT WAS PUBLISHED, I UNDERSTOOD SOME OF MY ESSENTIAL IDENTIFICATIONS WITH THE CHARACTERS AND MY EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR SITUATIONS. TO BE BRIEF, THEY RECALLED SOME RATHER PAINFUL AND DISTURBING ASSOCIATIONS TO ADOLESCENCE AND MADE QUITE EVIDENT TO ME A RECURRENT THEME OF MY RESPONSES TO THE PLAYS STUDIED HERE, THE "ODD MAN OUT" SYNDROME IN MY PSYCHIC LIFE. SINCE THAT RECOGNITION OF MY OF MY SUBJECTIVE RELATIONSHIP TO THE PLAY, I HAVE RE-READ IT SEVERAL TIMES, TAUGHT IT TO THREE UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES, SEEN IT IN TWO MORE PRODUCTIONS, AND ENJOYED MOST OF THESE EXPERIENCES IMMENSELY. PART OF THE PLEASURE I FEEL NOW TOWARD THE PLAY EMANATES FROM THE ACT OF HAVING TALKED TO OTHERS ABOUT IT, PATRICULARLY TO STUDENTS, AND SEEING RECURRING IN THEM SOME OF THE SAME PERPLEXING FEELINGS I MYSELF HAD IN FIRST ENCOUNTERING IT. TO MY MIND, THE MOST REWARDING AND SATISFYING EXPERIENCE OF THIS PLAY HAS COME IN BEING ABLE TO UNCOVER IN OTHERS THE CAPACITIES FOR ENJOYMENT OF IT WHICH THEY DID NOT HITHERTOO SUSPECT THEY HAD THROUGH OUR MUTUAL DISCOURSE WITH IT.

THE SURPRISING PART OF THIS EXPERIENCE IS THAT IN SPITE OF MS. ELLIOTT'S LONG INVOLVEMENT WITH PINTER CRITICISM AND WITH HER RESPONSES TO HIS PLAYS, THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NEW PLAY HAD NOT BEEN DETERMINED BY KNOWLEDGE OF THE PREVIOUS RESPONSES. RATHER IT TOOK THE SPECIFIC ACT OF SETTING FORTH THE RESPONSE TO THE NEW PLAY IN ORDER TO RECOGNIZE THE EXPERIENCE SHE HAD. YES, IT MAY HAVE BEEN PREDICTABLE THAT MS. ELLIOTT WOULD BE "PUZZLED" BY THIS PLAY AS SHE WAS BY SOME OF THE OTHERS, BUT IT WAS EQUALLY PREDICTABLE THAT SHE WOULD NOT BE THUS PUZZLED IN VIEW OF THE LONG AND SIGNIFICANT THOUGHT SHE GAVE TO HER RESPONSES TO THE OTHER PLAYS. THE POINT IS THAT ONLY BY TAKING THE TROUBLE TO OBJECTIFY HER OWN EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE RESPONSE STATEMENT, COULD SHE DEVELOP SATISFYING KNOWLEDGE OF HER EXPERIENCE.

MS. ELLIOTT REPORTS A TWO-STAGE PROCESS OF COMING TO TERMS WITH HER PLAY-EXPERIENCE ONCE THE RESPONSE HAS BEEN OBJECTIFIED. FIRST, SHE CONSCIOUSLY INTEGRATES

HER PRESENT ASSOCIATIONS WITH THOSE TO THE OTHER PLAYS AND IDENTIFIES THE TERMS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND PAST EXPERIENCES. IN THIS WAY SHE UNIFIES BOTH THE READING (AND VIEWING) EXPERIENCES ALONG WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF A SPECIFIC PART OF HER PERSONALITY. THE SECOND STAGE IS THE NEGOTIATION OF THIS KNOWLEDGE IN SEVERAL CLASSES AND THROUGH NEW VIEWINGS OF THE PLAY. SHE BRIEFLY DESCRIBES THE RESPONSE TO THE PLAY AS PARTAKING OF THE "ODD MAN OUT" SYNDROME IN HER MENTAL LIFE. IN THE ACT OF ANALOGIZING THIS EXPERIENCE WITH THE PREVIOUS ONES--THAT IS, IN THE ACT OF MAKING KNOWLEDGE OF THIS EXPERIENCE--SHE ELIMINATES THE NEGATIVE AFFECT OF ADOLESCENT OSTRACISM WHILE PRESERVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF ITS PRESENCE IN HER HISTORY. THEN, THROUGH THE PRESENTATION OF THESE FEELINGS TO HER STUDENTS, SHE TAKES COMFORT IN FINDING FURTHER ANALOGIES IN THEM--THAT IS, IN OTHER RESPONDENTS TO THE PLAY. THIS CREATION OF A COMMUNITY OF SIMILAR FEELINGS, RESULTING FROM PUBLIC NEGOTIATION OF RESPONSE STATEMENTS IS THE CHARACTERISTIC PEDAGOGICAL MEANS OF SYNTHESIZING NEW KNOWLEDGE.

THIS PROCESS EXPOSES THE ACTION OF PERSONAL MOTIVES IN THE SYNTHESIS OF CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE. MS. ELLIOTT WAS WORKING WITH THE SUBJECTIVE MOTIVES OF SIMULTANEOUSLY "FIGURING OUT" THE PLAY AND OF DIMINISHING HER DEPRESSION IN RESPONSE TO THE PLAY. THESE PERSONAL MOTIVES COMBINE WITH THE ABIDING PEDAGOGICAL MOTIVES OF ESTABLISHING A SPECIFIC NEW MUTUALITY OF DISCOURSE IN HER CLASSES IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORKS ON THE READING LIST. IN ONE RESPECT, MS. ELLIOTT IS ACTUALLY BECOMING A YOUNGER, PERHAPS ADOLESCENT, STUDENT IN NEGOTIATING HER ADOLESCENT FEELINGS. THE STUDENTS, ON THEIR PART DEAL WITH THEIR OWN ADOLESCENCE BY PARTAKING OF MS. ELLIOTT'S PROFESSIONAL RATIONALITY. HOWEVER, THIS SPECIFIC FORM OF MUTUALITY COULD NOT OCCUR WITHOUT THE DELIBERATE, SYSTEMATIC USE OF RESPONSE STATEMENTS.

ONE FINAL POINT. IN EXPLORING IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL THE RESPONSE OF PROFESSIONAL CRITICS OF PINTER, MS. ELLIOTT BOTH JOINS AND HELPS TO CHANGE THE IDENTITY OF THIS GROUP. THE DISSERTATION, INSOFAR AS IT IS READ BY OTHERS OF SIMILAR INTEREST,

IS ITSELF A GESTURE OF COMMUNAL COMMITMENT, AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE KNOWLEDGE IT PROPOSES DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON HOW THE COMMUNITY NEGOTIATES IT. IF EVEN SOME MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDES EVEN SLIGHTLY, AN ACT OF PEDAGOGY HAS TAKEN PLACE. THEREFORE, BOTH IN PERSONAL LIFE, IN THE CLASSROOM, AND IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES, RESEARCH IS PRODUCED BY PEDAGOGICAL MOTIVES AND ACTIONS.

IN A RECENT ESSAY IN PMLA, "READING CRITICISM," CARY NELSON ADVANCES A SIMILAR, THOUGH SOMEWHAT LESS PERSONALLY DETAILED, IDEA ABOUT THE AUTHORITY OF CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE. AFTER OBSERVING THAT MANY ACCOMPLISHED CRITICS PREFACE THEIR WORK WITH DISCLAIMERS AND APOLOGIES FOR THEIR STRONG VOICE, HE TRACES THIS HABIT TO THE "COLLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL ILLUSION OF OBJECTIVITY." HE WRITES IN CONCLUSION:

> IF WE CAN FORGO THE COLLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL ILLUSION OF OBJECTIVITY AND LEARN TO BE SOMEWHAT ICONOCLASTIC ABOUT WHAT WE WRITE, THE PRACTICE AND EVALUATION OF CRITICISM WILL BECOME UNASHEMEDLY EXCITING. BOTH THE READING AND THE WRITING OF CRITICISM WILL BE ENERGIZED BY AN INQUIRY INTO THE DYNAMICS OF CRITICAL LANGUAGE. FOR THE STUDY OF CRITICISM IS NECESSARILY ALSO THE STUDY OF OURSELVES AS CRITICS, JUST AS THE STUDY OF LITERATURE IS ALSO STUDY OF OURSELVES AS READERS. THOSE CRITICS WHO CAN (OR MUST) RISK THEMSELVES IN THEIR WRITING NOT ONLY GIVE US A GLIMPSE OF THEIR OWN INWARDNESS, THEY ALSO LET US SEE OURSELVES FROM A NEW VANTAGE POINT. PERHAPS THAT SELF-REFLEXIVENESS, LIKE THE SELF-REFLEXIVENESS OF THIS ESSAY, CAN NOW BE WELCOMED.[3]

ALTHOUGH NELSON'S ESSAY COULD BE CONSTRUED AS A PIECE OF OBJECTIVE RESEARCH INTO THE LANGUAGE OF A GROUP OF WELL-KNOWN CRITICS, HIS ANNOUNCED PURPOSE OF RE-DEFINING HIS OWN COMMUNITY IS A MORE GERMANE PERSPECTIVE TO TAKE ON HIS WORK. BECAUSE MR. NELSON DOES NOT EXCLUDE HIMSELF EITHER IN TONE OR IN FACT FROM HIS DISCUSSION, HIS PSYCHOLOGICAL JUDGMENTS ABOUT OTHER CRITICS HAVE THE FUNCTION OF ESTABLISHING A CRITICAL DISCOURSE THAT ADMITS PERSONAL MOTIVES AND ENCOURAGES THEIR INVOCATION IN DELIBERATE FASHION, INSTEAD OF APOLOGIZING FOR THE APPEARANCE OF MOTIVES WHERE THEY WERE NOT CONSCIOUSLY INTENDED. HIS AWARENESS OF OURSELVES IN CONTRAST TO "THE CRITICS" CREATES HIS PEDAGOGICAL ATTITUDE AND DIMINISHES THE ESSAY'S ROLE AS TRADITIONAL RESEARCH.

AT THE SAME TIME, MR. NELSON STRESSES THAT KNOWLEDGE CAN NOT BE PROPOSED ON A PURELY PERSONAL BASIS:

> THOUGH "READING CRITICISM" WAS MOTIVATED PARTLY BY A NEED TO UNDERSTAND MY OWN CRITICAL PRACTICE, IT WOULD BE FALSE FOR ME TO SUGGEST I COULD HAVE WRITTEN IT IN SOME MORE OVERTLY CONFESSIONAL FORM. IN THE PROCESS OF READING, REREADING, AND WRITING ABOUT OTHER CRITICS, I LEARNED A GOOD DEAL ABOUT MYSELF AS A CRITIC. THIS IS ONE OF THE REWARDS OF STUDYING OTHER CRITICS: THE BENEFITS OF PURE SELF-REFLECTION ARE NOT THE SAME.[4]

THIS IS ESSENTIALLY A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PEDAGOGY AND THERAPY. THE PERSPECTIVE IN THERAPY REFLECTS A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO PAY ATTENTION ONLY TO ONESELF AS ONE CONCEIVES ONESELF. THE PERSPECTIVE IN PEDAGOGY REFLECTS A DECISION TO UNDERSTAND ONE'S MENTALITY IN A PROCESS OF PUBLIC NEGOTIATION WITH OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY. THE NATURAL RESULT OF SUCH NEGOTIATION IS KNOWLEDGE, AND THE NEGOTIATIONS MAY BE APPROPRIATELY UNDERSTOOD AS RESEARCH.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORK OF MS. ELLIOTT AND MR. NELSON IS THAT MS. ELLIOTT HAD FIVE YEARS SOONER ADOPTED THE ATTITUDE MR. NELSON OUTLINED, AND SHE AND PURSUED ITS PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND PEDAGOGICAL CONSEQUENCES. THE NUB OF THEIR DIFFERENCES LIES IN THE USE OF THE RESPONSE STATEMENTS, WHICH ARE NOT NOW A PART OF ACADEMIC LITERARY CRITICISM. RATHER THAN ARGUING THE POINT AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO CITE ONE FURTHER PIECE OF RECENT RESEARCH IN RESPONSE THAT SUGGESTS A PRODUCTIVE LINE OF INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE AND WHICH INDICATES HOW THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE MAY BE MORE DECISIVELY UNIFIED.

IN A DISCUSSION OF SOME OF HIS REGULAR CLASSROOM PRACTICES OF USING RESPONSE STATEMENTS, THORNTON F. JORDAN PRESENTS HIS OWN RESPONSE TO THE JOSEPH STORY IN GENESIS.[5] HIS ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSE YIELDS THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS: "THE SENSE OF DOUBLE EMOTIONS, OFTEN AMBIVALENT, IS THE DOMINANT EMOTIONAL CHORD OF MY RESPONSE. . . . I LET MY AMBIVALENT FEELINGS INFLUENCE MY ESTIMATION OF JOSEPH. . . . WHILE I SEE HIS ANGER AS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH, I JUDGE HIS PATIENCE, OBEDIENCE,

AND SENSE OF DUTY AS 'INHUMAN.' . . . I JUDGE HIM AS I JUDGE MYSELF." MR. JORDAN FURTHER OBSERVES THAT WHEN HE LIKES JOSEPH, IT IS FOR STRENGTHS HE ALSO CLAIMS FOR HIMSELF, AND WHEN HE REJECTS HIM, IT IS FOR WEAKNESSES HE DISDAINS IN HIMSELF. ONCE HE HAS FULLY FORMULATED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE RESPONSE STATEMENT, MR. JORDAN USES THE FORMULATION AS AN EXPLANATORY PRINCIPLE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF A MAJOR LANGUAGE PATTERN IN THE RESPONSE. SPECIFICALLY, "AMIBALENCE IS CHARACTERISTIC OF MY STYLE IN THIS PARTICULAR PAPER, AS IN THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES":

> JOSEPH IS ENVIED NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE IS THE FAVORITE BUT BECAUSE HE IS A TATTLETALE, AND HE REVEALS HIS DREAM OF SUPERIORITY TO HIS BROTHERS.
>
> ON THE ONE HAND, HIS RETENTION OF ANGER IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH; ON THE OTHER, HIS PATIENCE AND OBEDIENCE ARE INHUMAN.
>
> AS I ATTEMPT TO RUN AWAY FROM HOME, I WAS BOTH SCARED AND ANGRY.
>
> I CHOSE MY CAREER PARTLY FROM DESIRE, PARTLY AS A GESTURE OF ANGER.
>
> THERE WERE TWO MOTIVES FOR MY CHOICES: ONE TO PURSUE A CAREER ON MY OWN TERMS, THE OTHER TO BRING MY FATHER TO RECOGNIZE ME.
>
> IN EMOTIONAL EXILE I FELT THE DOUBLE FEELING OF RESENTMENT AND LONGING.

A RELATED FORM OF AMBIVALENT ARTICULATION, MR. JORDAN OBSERVES, IS THE "YES . . . BUT" PATTERN:

> I WAS ANGRY AND PAINED AT MY PARENTS' DECISION BUT I CHARACTERISTICALLY WITHHELD MY RESISTANCE.
>
> I FELT LIKE AN ALIEN . . . BUT DID WELL.
>
> I RECOGNIZE THE ADVANTAGE OF JOSEPH'S WITHHOLDING RESENTMENT, YET I RESENT IT.

AS AN OBJECTIVE SET OF SENTENCES BEARING A SEMANTIC PATTERN, THIS IS NOT VERY DIF-

FERENT FROM THE THOUSANDS OF ANALOGOUS ONES EXTRACTED FROM NOVELS AND STUDIED IN THE SCHOLARLY LITERATURE OF STYLISTICS. HOWEVER, THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STATUS OF THIS SET IS CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT BECAUSE THEY WERE WRITTEN BY MR. JORDAN IN ONE MOTIVATIONAL CONTEXT AND THEN INTERPRETED BY HIM IN A SUBSEQUENT CONTEXT ITSELF CREATED BY THE FIRST ONE. THE SUCCESSION OF MOTIVES CREATES MR. JORDAN'S INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITY IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS FREUD'S INTERPRETATION OF HIS OWN DREAMS BECAME AUTHORITATIVE. THE MEANINGS FOR THE SENTENCES WERE CREATED NOT IN THE ACT OF WRITING THEM, BUT IN THE ACT OF INTERPRETING THEM. THE SENTENCES DID HAVE A NOMINAL MEANING BEFORE MR. JORDAN REVIEWED THEM BUT ONLY IN THE SENSE THAT OTHER SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH WOULD CONSIDER THEM ENGLISH SENTENCES IN A PURELY IDENTIFICATORY WAY. ONLY WHEN LANGUAGE IS NOT SYMBOLIC--THAT IS, WHEN IT FUNCTIONS SIGNALLY, LIKE A TRAFFIC LIGHT--DOES IT BEAR THIS TRIVIAL SORT OF MEANING. IN ITS CONSEQUENTIAL USES SUCH AS THE EFFORT TO FORMULATE KNOWLEDGE, THE MEANINGS CAN ONLY BE COMPREHENDED AS A FUNCTION OF EITHER KNOWLEDGE OF OR ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE SPEAKER'S MOTIVES. MEANINGS ARE CLEAREST WHEN THESE MOTIVES ARE PART OF THE INTERPRETIVE DISCOURSE.

TO FURTHER ARTICULATE THIS POINT, LET ME COMPARE MR. JORDAN'S SET OF SENTENCES TO A TYPICAL SET FOUND IN NOAM CHOMSKY'S RECENT TREATISE, REFLECTIONS ON LANGUAGE:

> IT SEEMS TO US THAT BILL LIKES EACH OTHER.
>
> WE EXPECTED BILL TO LIKE EACH OTHER.
>
> WE WERE SHOCKED BY BILL'S HATRED OF EACH OTHER.
>
> TOM SEEMS TO US TO LIKE EACH OTHER.[6]

THESE SENTENCES ARE OFFERED WITH THE AIM OF SHOWING THAT WHILE NONE IS GRAMMATICAL AND ALL HAVE SOME MEANING, IT IS GRAMMATICAL RATHER THAN SEMANTIC CONSIDERATIONS WHICH RULE THEM OUT OF THE LANGUAGE.

EVEN THOUGH CHOMSKY WROTE THESE SENTENCES, THEY ARE NOT HIS IN THE SAME WAY

THAT MR. JORDAN'S ARE HIS OWN. CHOMSKY'S REASONING IS THUS: HERE ARE SENTENCES I MADE UP BUT WITH THE STIPULATION NOT THAT I HAVE SPOKEN THEM BUT THAT THEY MAY BELONG IN PRINCIPLE TO ANY SPEAKER OF ENGLISH, WHO MAY CLAIM AUTHORSHIP IN ANY CONTEXT HE CHOOSES; THEREFORE, THEY MAY BE TAKEN AS EVIDENCE FOR THE FORMULATION OF ABSTRACT PRINCIPLES WHICH GOVERN THE HUMAN BEING'S CAPACITY FOR MAKING GRAMMATICAL RULES. HOWEVER, THIS VIEWPOINT MEANS THAT THE SENTENCES NEVER HAD A SEMANTIC TO BEGIN WITH, EXCEPT IN THE TRIVIAL SENSE MENTIONED ABOVE; RATHER THEY WERE FORMULATED BY THE MOTIVE TO DEMONSTRATE THE ACTION OF GRAMMATICAL RULES, WHOSE EXISTENCE FEW PEOPLE EVER DOUBTED. A SENTENCE IS NOT CONSIDERED LANGUAGE BY ITS FORMULATION ALONE, BUT BY ITS FORMULATION IN THE SERVICE OF A SEMANTIC--WHEN SPECIFIC PERSONS UNDERSTAND THE SENTENCE IN A SPECIFIC SITUATION. THE CONCEPT OF COMPETENCE DEFINES SENTENCES BY THEIR FORMULATION ALONE, AND THUS DEFINES OUT OF CONSIDERATION THE ONLY CONTEXTS IN WHICH LANGUAGE HAS ANY CONSEQUENCE TO BEGIN WITH--WHEN INDIVIDUALS USE LANGUAGE TO DEAL WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH THEMSELVES. IF THE RULES OF UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR ARE DERIVED BY ABSTRACTING THE STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES SUCH AS THOSE ABOVE, IT IS HARD TO SEE JUST WHAT SUCH RULES EXPLAIN, SINCE THE ORIGINAL SENTENCES WERE MEANINGLESS.

IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FEATURE OF CHOMSKY'S WORK THAT THE CONCEPTION OF GRAMMAR IS DERIVED FROM A SYSTEMATIC COMPARISON OF THE GRAMMATICAL WITH THE UNGRAMMATICAL, AND THAT THE EXPLANATION OF LANGUAGE WILL BE A SPECIFICATION OF CONSTRAINTS ON ITS USE. HOWEVER, THIS NOTION OF EXPLANATION IS UNSATISFACTORY FOR REASONS CHOMSKY HIMSELF INTIMATES IN THE LAST PART OF <u>REFLECTIONS ON LANGUAGE</u>, NAMELY, WHAT IS TO BE EXPLAINED ABOUT LANGUAGE IS WHAT IT DOES DO, OR WHAT PEOPLE DO WITH IT, AND NOT WHAT THEY WOULDN'T DO BECAUSE OF UNGRAMMATICALITY ALONE. CHOMSKY CONSIDERS THIS DIMENSION OF LANGUAGE A MYSTERY, AS OPPOSED TO A PROBLEM THAT IS IN PRINCIPLE SOLUBLE.

UNDOUBTEDLY, MR. JORDAN'S SENTENCES OBEY THE RULES OF TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR, AND IN A NOMINAL SENSE, THERE IS A MINIMUM OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY IN THEM. THE QUES-

TION IS, TO WHAT EXTENT WILL THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS LANGUAGE WITH RULES EXPLAIN IT. EVEN IF EVERY DETAIL OF THESE SENTENCES WAS ACCOUNTED FOR FORMALLY, WE STILL WILL NOT HAVE EXPLAINED EITHER HOW OR WHY MR. JORDAN SYNTHESIZED THE SENTENCES. IF I AM TRYING TO EXPLAIN WHY APPLES FALL, A MATHEMATICAL FORMULATION OF THE LAW OF GRAVITATION MAY BE EXPLANATORY IN SOME CONTEXTS, SINCE NO PART OF MY DEMAND FOR EXPLANATION HAD TO DO WITH WHETHER THE APPLE WANTED TO FALL. HOWEVER, IN STUDYING REAL SENTENCES BY REAL PEOPLE, ONLY IN THE MOST INCONSEQUENTIAL SENSE ARE SENTENCES PEREMPTORILY OR AUTOMATICALLY ARTICULATED; MOTIVATED BEHAVIOR REQUIRES DIFFERENT PRINCIPLES OF EXPLANATION THAN NONMOTIVATED BEHAVIOR.

THE DOUBLENESS MR. JORDAN POINTS TO IN THE NINE SENTENCES HE CITES APPEARS IN A VARIETY OF GRAMMATICAL FORMS, SOMETIMES THROUGH THE JUXTAPOSITION OF CLAUSES, OTHER TIMES IN TWO PARTS OF THE SAME PREDICATE. AS STUDIES IN STYLISTICS REPEATEDLY SHOW, IT IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DRAW ANY CONCLUSION ABOUT LANGUAGE THROUGH A DIRECT COMPARISON OF SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE COPIOUS OTHER MATERIALS MR. JORDAN PRESENTS, IT IS APPARENT THAT ALMOST EVERY INSTANCE OF BALANCED LANGUAGE IS A VARIATION OF THE PRINCIPLE: I HAVE AMBIVALENT FEELINGS ABOUT HOW I RELATE TO OR THINK OF MY FATHER IN MY RESPONSE TO THIS STORY. MR. JORDAN'S IDENTIFICATION WITH JOSEPH TOOK PLACE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER. THIS RELATIONSHIP PROVIDES A MOTIVATIONAL FRAMEWORK THAT GIVES MEANING TO EACH OF THE "DOUBLE" USAGES. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE FIRST SENTENCE, THE MAIN CLAUSE, "JOSEPH IS ENVIED," SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS A PREMISE OR A SIMPLE NOTATION OF CONTEXT, WHILE THE SUBORDINATE CLAUSES REPRESENT MR. JORDAN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL INITIATIVE. THIS INITIATIVE DEFINES THE PREMISE AND CREATES THE MEANING FOR THE WHOLE SENTENCE. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SENTENCE IN TERMS OF RULES WOULD HAVE NO WAY OF DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MAIN AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES; HOWEVER, THE MOTIVE FOR THE SENTENCE IS FOUND IN THE SUBORDINATE--AND COORDINATE IN THIS CASE--CLAUSES. OBVIOUSLY, ONE CANNOT DECIDE ON THE MOTIVE FOR THE SENTENCE BY SIMPLE PERUSAL OF THE SENTENCE, SINCE ONLY MR.JORDAN CAN HAVE DEFINED THE EXPLANATORY PRINCIPLE THAT ESTABLISHES IMPORTANT LINGUISTIC ACTS. ONCE THIS PRINCIPLE IS ADMITTED TO DISCOURSE,

IT CREATES A NEGOTIABLE STANDARD OF HOW TO PERCEIVE EACH SENTENCE, OTHER SUBORDINATE UNITS WITHIN THE RESPONSE STATEMENT, AND FINALLY THE WHOLE STATEMENT AS AN INTEGRATED GESTURE OF SELF-DEFINITION IN THE PEDAGOGICAL COMMUNITY.

A MAJORITY OF THE SENTENCES REFER TO ANGER--EITHER JOSEPH'S OR MR. JORDAN'S. THIS IDEA BECOMES MEANINGFUL IN RELATION TO THE MOTIVATING FEELINGS OF THE FULL RESPONSE. ITS VARIOUS GRAMMATICAL ROLES REPRESENT DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES MR. JORDAN IS TAKING ON THIS ONE FEELING HE IS EXPERIENCING IN THE RESPONSE TO THE STORY. IN THE STATEMENT, MR. JORDAN ESTABLISHES IN HIS MIND A SUBJECTIVE DIALECTIC WHICH PERMITS THIS EXPLORATORY VARIATION OF PERSPECTIVE AND HELPS HIM TO COMMAND THE EMOTIONAL TERRITORY HE HAS STAKED OUT IN HIS READING INITIATIVE. THE DEGREE OF LINGUISTIC VARIATION, BOTH IN VOCABULARY AND IN SYNTAX, REPRESENTS THE DEGREE OF MOTIVATIONAL VARIATION MR. JORDAN CAN EXPRESS. IN EACH OF THE USAGE PAIRS HE CITES, THE ANGER IS ACCOMPANIED BY ANOTHER FEELING. SOMETIMES THE PAIR APPEARS IN A STATEMENT BY ITSELF, AS IN THE SECOND AND SIXTH SENTENCES; OTHER TIMES IT IS A DEFINITION OF A PERCEPTUAL PREMISE, AS IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH SENTENCES. IN EACH INSTANCE THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND AT THE SAME TIME ITS MEANING IS TO BE CONCEIVED IN TERMS OF MR. JORDAN'S SELF-DEFINED GENERATING MOTIVE.

IF A PERSON COMPOSES A RELATIVELY ORDINARY ESSAY--ANYTHING FROM "WHAT I DID LAST SUMMER" TO "THE REAL MEANING OF HAMLET"--THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE WRITER THINKS OF IT AS "EXPOSITORY" IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH IT IS INACCESSIBLE OF COMMUNAL NEGOTIATION INTO KNOWLEDGE. THE PRACTICE OF FORMULATING RESPONSE STATEMENTS IS A MEANS FOR MAKING AN ACT OF LANGUAGE AVAILABLE FOR CONVERSION INTO KNOWLEDGE. FURTHERMORE, THIS ACT PROCEEDS FROM A PREDECIDED COMMUNITY INTEREST IN ENGAGING CERTAIN WORKS OF LITERATURE, AND WOULD BE MEANINGLESS UNLESS THIS OR SOME COMPARABLE PURPOSE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED.

CONSIDER IN THIS LIGHT THE PATH MR. JORDAN TRAVELLED IN ORDER TO REACH THE SMALL PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE HE ARTICULATED. HE BEGAN WITH THE FACT THAT HE IS A TEACHER; HE ENTER THE CLASSROOM WITH THE CONSCIOUS PURPOSE OF READING AND RESPONDING

IN COOPERATION WITH OTHERS IN THE CLASS. HE COLLECTS A GROUP OF RESPONSE STATEMENTS ONE OF WHICH IS HIS OWN. IT IS NOT IMMEDIATELY CLEAR WHAT HE OR ANYONE ELSE HAS LEARNED, NOR IS IT OBVIOUS HOW TO COORDINATE THE STATEMENTS WITH ONE ANOTHER. AT THIS POINT, THE SUBJECTIVE CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE AND INTERPRETATION GOVERNS THE PROCEDURAL OPTIONS BY POSING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO I, MR. JORDAN, WANT TO KNOW?"--OR MORE GENERALLY, WHAT DO I, MEMBER OF THIS CLASS WANT TO KNOW. TO DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE THE FIRST STEP IS NOT TO CONSULT THE DATA, LIKE AN EMPIRICIST, OR TO CONSULT AN ABSTRACTION, LIKE A RATIONALIST. RATHER ONE DECIDES, AS IN EVERYDAY LIFE, WHAT ONE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW. THIS LATTER ORDINARY QUESTION LED TO THE PROCEDURE MR. JORDAN OUTLINED AND CARRIED THROUGH. THE MOTIVE FOR SELF-UNDERSTANDING NECESSARILY PRECEEDS MOTIVES FOR COMMUNAL NEGOTIATION; AT THE SAME TIME SELF-UNDERSTANDING CANNOT PROCEED EXCEPT THROUGH SUCH NEGOTIATION. IN THIS WAY, THE ORIGINAL SUBJECTIVE MOTIVE ESTABLISHES THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE PEDAGOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE. MR. JORDAN'S LINGUISTIC AND LITERARY DISCUSSION OF HIS RESPONSE IDENTIFIES HIMSELF AS THIS READER OF THE JOSEPH STORY, AND AS THE TEACHER OF THE CLASS COMMONLY INTERESTED IN THIS READING EXPERIENCE.

IN VIEW OF THE ARGUMENT I HAVE THUS FAR PURSUED, THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT I CAN JUSTLY CLAIM ABOUT MR. JORDAN'S OR ANYONE ELSE'S WORK. IT IS NECESSARY THAT I MAKE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN WHAT I SAY I KNOW OF MR. JORDAN'S AND MS. ELLIOTT'S WORK AND WHAT I CLAIM TO BE TRUE OF MR. NELSON'S AND MR. CHOMSKY'S. I HAVE KNOWN THE FORMER TWO PEOPLE FOR ABOUT EIGHT YEARS, WHILE I HAVE NEVER MET THE LATTER TWO. FURTHERMORE, ALL FIVE OF US ARE NOT COMING TO YOU AT ONCE TO PRESENT OUR VIEWS. ONLY I AM SPEAKING, AND AS A RESULT, ONLY MY OWN MOTIVES ARE GUIDING MY DISCUSSION. NOT THE LEAST OF THESE MOTIVES IS TO PERSUADE YOU OF MY OWN OPINION WITH REGARD TO THE NATURE OF RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY IN THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE. EVEN THOUGH YOU MAY SAY TO YOURSELF THAT THIS LAST POINT IS SO OBVIOUS THAT IT HARDLY BEARS MENTIONING, I BELIEVE THAT IF WE TAKE IT SERIOUSLY, IT DECISIVELY CHANGES THE NATURE OF OUR DISCUSSION. THAT IS, I AM NOT TRYING SIMPLY TO LAY

OUT BEFORE CERTAIN PIECES OF RESEARCH ABOUT WHICH YOU MAY NOT HAVE HEARD. RATHER, THIS VERY ACT, NO MATTER HOW EXPOSITORILY I MAY WISH TO CONSTRUE IT, IS AN INITIATIVE WITHIN AN ASSUMED COMMUNITY. OUR DISCUSSION WILL BECOME EXTREMELY COMPLEX, THOUGH ALSO GREATLY ENRICHED, ONCE WE EACH ACKNOWLEDGE THE MOTIVATIONAL PERSPECTIVE WE THINK IS AT WORK AT THIS TIME. SUCH ACKNOWLEDGMENT CANNOT HELP BUT CLARIFY WHAT WE FEEL WE KNOW AFTER OUR NEGOTIATIONS. NO MATTER HOW BROAD OR GENERAL THE FORMULATION OF A PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE MAY SOUND, ITS FUNCTIONAL AND MOST CONSEQUENTIAL MEANING IS RELATIVE TO EACH PARTICIPATING SUBJECTIVITY. THUS IT WOULD BE HIGHLY IRRESPONSIBLE, SHOULD EACH PERSON BE PERSUADED OF MY OPINION, FOR EACH TO RUN TO HIS CLASSROOM TO COLLECT RESPONSE STATEMENTS. IT IS NOT A METHOD, BUT AN ATTITUDE AND AN ORIENTATION OF MIND THAT I AM PROPOSING, AND IT IS BORNE OF MY OWN FRUSTRATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES IN BECOMING A TEACHER. IN RETROSPECT OF THE HISTORY OF MY DAILY EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM, I HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT, WITH SUITABLE EFFORT AND INTEREST, PEDAGOGY AND RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE ARE MOST PRODUCTIVELY VIEWED AS THE SAME THING.

NOTES

1. ALAN C. PURVES, ED. AND CO-AUTHOR, *HOW PORCUPINES MAKE LOVE: NOTES ON A RESPONSE-CENTERED CURRICULUM* (LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1972).
2. INDIANA UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH.
3. CARY NELSON, "READING CRITICISM," *PMLA*, 91 (No. 5, OCTOBER 1976), 813.
4. CARY NELSON, *PMLA FORUM*, 92 (No. 2, MARCH 1977), 311.
5. THORNTON F. JORDAN, "REPORT ON TEACHING SUBJECTIVE CRITICISM OF LITERATURE," AUGUST 1976, UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT, COLUMBUS, GEORGIA.
6. NOAM CHOMSKY, *REFLECTIONS ON LANGUAGE* (NEW YORK, 1975), P. 101.